present 3 Expert Committees and 4 Task Forces are operating in the Ministry of Agriculture. The relevant details are given in the enclosed statement. (*See* below).

(c) In view of the fact that it is proposed to introduce an alternative crop to tobacco, constituting a Task Force or an Expert Committee to study tobacco related problems is not under consideration at present.

**Statement**

| Sl. No. | Name of the Expert Committee/Task Force and subject | Date of formation |
|---|---|---|
| **1.** | **Expert Committees** | |
| (i) | Working group of experts to review the cattle and buffaloes breeding policies. | January, 1992 |
| (ii) | Expert Committee on strengthening the network of Veterinary Health Services in the country. | October, 1994 |
| (iii) | Expert Committee to evaluate progress of Animal Quarantine and Certification Scheme. | November, 1994 |
| **2.** | **Task Forces** | |
| (i) | Task force to look into the problems of breeding programmes of Sheep and Goats and their evaluation, role of Research and Development and the problems which need urgent attention of researchers. | April, 1993 |
| (ii) | Task force to review the Cotton production and other related matters. | September 1994 |
| (iii) | Task force to review the Jute production, quality, improvement of fibre and other related matters. | October 1994 |
| (iv) | Task force on terms of trade between Agricultural and Non-agricultural Sectors. | March, 1993 |

**Study on Business Development Planning**

2730. SHRI G. Y. KRISHNAN : Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state :

(a) whether it is a fact that a study on 'Business Development Planning' for the growth of Industrial and Handloom co-operative societies in the country had been recently conducted jointly by his Ministry and the National Co-operative Union of India;

(b) if so, what are its main findings; and

(c) the Government's reaction thereto ?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI ARVIND NETAM) : (a) No, Sir.

(b) and (c) Do not arise.

**Fine and Superfine Paddy**

2731. DR. NAUNIHAL SINGH : Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state :

(a) whether it is a fact that the difference between the fine and superfine paddy has become a bone of contention again this year, with farmers protesting that Government are procuring their 'better' produce at cheaper rates; if so, what are the reasons therefor; and

(b) whether it is also a fact that though Government treat the PR-106 variety as superfine; and therefore, purchases it at the official rate of Rs. 380 per quintal; yet Government procurement agencies were forcing the farmers to part with the produce Rs. 20 per quintal cheaper than the fixed rate; if so, what steps Government have taken to protect the farmer's interests ?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI ARVIND NETAM) : (a) and (b) Different varieties of paddy are classified as common, fine and superfine and are purchased on the basis of Minimum Support Prices (MSP) declared for these varieties. MSP offer is available to a particular variety of paddy of fair average quality, according to the uniform specifications decided by the Central Government. The MSPs for common, fine and superfine are Rs. 340, Rs. 360 and Rs. 380 respectively per quintal for 1994-95 Kharif Marketing Season. PR-106 is classified as superfine variety. Permissible maximum percentage of admixture of lower variety of grains in paddy offered for sale is 10%.

In cases where the admixture is more than 10%, the category is downgraded to the next lower category. There was pressure in some places that procuring agencies buy paddy even, with higher admixture of fine variety of paddy in superfine at the rate of Rs. 380 per quintal (MSP fixed for superfine). The procurement operation is conducted as per the norms/ specifications of the grains offered. There are no reports of *PR-106* variety of paddy conforming to the uniform specifications being purchased as fine.

**Patent for Genetically Engineered Cotton**

2732. SHRI SOM PAL : Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state :

(a) whether it is a fact that a patent for genetically engineered cotton has been granted to a US multinational Agracetus giving a complete monopoly over all forms of genetically engineered cotton in violation of the Indian Patent Act;

(b) if so, what are the reasons therefor; and

(c) what is its likely effect on the research for improvement of cotton varieties being carried out in the country ?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI ARVIND NETAM) : (a) M/s. Agracetus Inc. of USA was granted a Patent No. 168950 for a "method of producing transformed cotton cells by tissue culture", under the Patents Act, 1970 which was later revoked by Government under Section 66 of the Patents Act, 1970.

(b) and (c) Question does not arise.

**Recommendations of Johal Committee**

2733. SHRI BHUPINDER SINGH MANN : Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state :

(a) what are the recommendations of the Johal Committee which was set up to give its report on diversification of agricultural produce from wheat/paddy rotation to some other crops in Punjab ;

(b) whether diversification to sugarcane production was recommended by the Committee;

(c) if so, how many sugar mills, according to it, are required in addition to the existing sugar mills in Punab; and

(d) the steps being taken to promote diversification from traditional crops in Punjab ?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI ARVIND NETAM) : (a) Major recommendation of Johal Committee Report submitted in May, 1986 inter alia includes that oilseed crops, pulses and sugarcane are the crops for diversification in lieu of wheat/paddy rotation in Punjab.

(b) Yes, Sir.

(c) The Committee recommended 50 more sugar mills in the State.

(d) State Government has taken steps to promote diversification, which bring about significant increase in area coverage under sugarcane, number of sugar mills and their crushing capacity since 1985-86. Some important steps of State Government are as follows :

(i) Most promising crop sequences like Rice-gobhi, sarson-mung bean ; Rice-potato-groundnut, etc. are being popularised.

(ii) Programmes for distribution of disease free seed varieties and other incentives have been initiated to increase the acreage under sugarcane.

(iii) An exercise is underway to determine a limited number of locations where additional area can be brought under sugarcane without compromising the reserve area of existing mills.

**Protection of the Interests of Cotton Growers**

2734. SHRI BHUPINDER SINGH MANN : Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state :

(a) the steps taken by Government to protect the interests of the cotton growers to provide due prices of their produce which is denied to them in the absence of a free-market and they are exposed to the greed of textile industry by putting ban on exports of raw-cotton;

(b) what were the prices of cotton in the world market when their export was banned and to what extent the prices were pushed down; and

(c) the steps to safeguard the interests of cotton-growers ?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI ARVIND NETAM) : (a) and (c) The announcement of Minimum Support Price (MSP) and release of automatic quota of 5 lakh bales of cotton are made annually.

(b) The varieties of cotton produced in other countires are not strictly comparable to those produced in India. However the prices of some of the foreign varieties were ruling higher than the Indian varieties of cotton when their export was temporarily suspended during 1993-94. Even after the suspension of exports, prices generally maintained an upward trend.